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"Is this the best I can do?"

5.
THE, OPEN DOOR;

OR,

VALERA IN SEARCH OF A MISSION.

BY,

JOSEPHINE N. POLLARD.

31

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THE OPEN DOOR.

CHAPTER I.

"**I**S this the best I can do?" said Valera as she dropped her work and leaned her head wearily upon her hand.

She had asked herself the same question over and over again, without receiving any definite answer. It was her first thought in the morning as she took up her needle to commence the distasteful routine of the day, and it was her last thought as she laid her weary head upon the pillow at night. It floated through every dream, it was

the miasma that arose from the field where discontented ambition was continually sowing its seeds, and it completely filled every atom of her existence.

She was not discontented with the lot in which God had placed her—oh no!—but she felt that she was capable of better things than mere manual labor, and could not reconcile herself to a routine that was so wearisome and distasteful. She might do *better* than this—she was anxious to do her *very best*, that she might lift her soul from this state of warp in which it existed and give her brain the freedom it so ardently desired.

In fact, it was this brain of hers that made Valera so restless. If she could only have laid it aside for a while and managed to do her appointed work

without it, it would have been far less wearing to her nerves and exhausting to her vitality. It made her a world of trouble with its annoying questions and unanswerable arguments.

“You are neglecting me!” it would whisper, this brain of hers, and the fingers would twitch their reply: “You are hindering us!” and into her heart would steal the electric current, until in very agony Valera would cry out: “Is this the best I can do?”

She folded her hands over her neglected work and allowed her thoughts to wander far back into the past, even to that hour when she met with her first sorrow, the overwhelming cloud which had robbed her youth of its brightness and cast a shadow over all her future life.

That sombre-tinted picture gleamed

out with weird distinctness from the walls of memory—that room, with its terrible stillness, that group of awe-bound watchers, the laboring breath that grew shorter and shorter until it ceased entirely, and Valera knew she was—what she never, never anticipated—fatherless! Could she ever forget it? Then, for the first time, she realized the cruelty of death. Then she understood, as nothing else could have taught her, that life was not to be the garden in which she had walked hitherto and plucked thornless roses. The “breadwinner” was taken away, and the house was indeed desolate. Then, also, was she made to feel a nearness and reliance on the great heart of the infinite Father. Before, her faith could never comprehend his condescension, but now that the dear earthly father, whose love

and protection rounded the circle of each day's enjoyment, was gone beyond sight or sense, she could say, "Our Father who art in heaven," with her heart upon her lip, and feel conscious that Heaven alone could give the comfort and consolation she required.

Valera's love for her father had been part of her life; she leaned upon him, trusted in him and depended on him for everything.

And he was proud of her.

Ah, there was the loss to the fatherless child! She might do her very best hereafter; there would be no one to appreciate or understand her, no one whose eye would kindle with a smile of satisfaction, as she told how well she had succeeded in her lessons, what a courageous swimmer she had become and what heroic deeds she meant to

accomplish. It seemed as though the child was crushed completely.

Scarcely sixteen, but oh how old she had grown since she looked on that dead face! Yesterday there was everything to encourage and hope for; to-day it was as though a black wall arose and hid both heaven and earth from her sight, and she could see nothing but that pallid corpse which had once been the joy of the household, the sweet companion, the faithful husband, the noble father, the honest man.

"Thank God," Valera had often said, "I need never be ashamed of my father's memory!" But his work was over on earth, and hers had only just begun.

"Valera must be a teacher," said the mother, while each one was being pointed to her special work, for there were

seven children dependent on her for counsel and support, and the majority could do very little toward lightening her burdens.

Unfortunately, Valera's mental training had been in a school where everything was superficial and artificial, and where nothing thorough was ever attempted. Natural ability had a fair chance of success, but natural stupidity could never hope to improve upon nature. Promotion was according to age, not according to attainments, and the young girl who could hardly spell "*psalms*" and "*hymns*" ranked as high as those who were proficient in all branches.

The rudiments were non-essential; the foundation was supposed to have been laid long ago, and position or personal appearance was the distin-

guishing feature of this school that only graduated into the first society. Valera's associations were pleasant, though not particularly beneficial, especially as she herself had not any inordinate desire for any knowledge that involved hard study. She learned readily, skimming over the surface of things merely, and laying by very little of the honeyed store that would supply her need in the future.

One talent she possessed which gave her especial prominence in the school and gained for her considerable honor: this was a facility for rhyming, which had been given her almost from her cradle, and her jingled sentences had frequently caused the mother to declare that "Valera would be a poetess!"

Yes, Valera undoubtedly had genius, but it wanted direction. It was not

enough that she had the rudder in her hand, she must be taught which way to steer. She needed to be educated up to her career, but she was not. Her talents were indeed her stumbling-block, for everything was expected of Valera and no allowance made for ignorance, until the oft-reiterated sentence, "A girl of your talents!" made her feel as though born under an unlucky star and watched over by an evil genius. Composition-day had no terrors for her to undergo, she wrote too easily, too thoughtlessly. Her first attempt at poetry was at a time when her father's affairs were embarrassed, and Valera's sensitive heart sought out some way to relieve the pressure upon his income. She wrote a poem, entitled "My Mother's Voice," but it failed to make itself heard outside of her own

heart, and she gave up the idea of helping in that way, though she still cultivated the acquaintance of the Muse.

“What shall I write upon?” queried the young girl as she sat in the chapel one morning at the close of the week. “I don’t like any of the subjects given for compositions, so what shall I write about?” Her eye rested on the pictures that ornamented the chapel walls—Cole’s “Voyage of Life”—and in them she found a rich field for her imagination, and her decision was made immediately. The poem, crude as it was, was considered worthy of publication, and its appearance was the first real triumph Valera had ever known. As the pictures are still in existence, it may not be amiss to exhibit the effect they produced upon the mind of a young and imaginative school-

girl by reproducing the poem as it first appeared before the public.

“The following pretty poem is from the pen of one of the members of the — Institute, who has yet numbered but fifteen summers. Though written for a ‘composition,’ it has many beauties, and the fair authoress, in after years, when time and study have developed her genius, will recognize with pleasurable emotions these, the first flowers she entwined in the wreath of poesy.”

LINES WRITTEN UPON VIEWING COLE'S PICTURES
OF THE VOYAGE OF LIFE.

INFANCY.

Lo! a bright bud of innocence opened to view,
Surrounded with flowers of various hue;
In a bark he is seated, superb to behold,
Of diamonds and rubies and bright-burnished gold.
No wind speeds it forward: what need of the tide,
With an angel the helmsman, an angel the guide?

From a dark cave emerging, now bursts on his view
The golden-tinged sun, the expanse of bright blue,
With tiny hands raised and a look cast above,
A meet little emblem of innocent love.
Ah! must thou pass on, and be lost to my sight?
Then this world will remain unto me a dark night;
But a vision so joyous can never last long,
But mingle at last in the midst of life's throng.
Then glide, thou bright bark, to thy haven so clear:
May thy path be as bright as it dawns on thee here!

YOUTH.

Again a light boat on a streamlet is seen,
Where the banks are o'erladen with beautiful green,
Like a mantle of velvet spread out to the sight
Reflects to the gazer a bright world of light.
The fair bark has lost none of its beauty of yore,
But a youth is within it, the fair child before,
And the angel is gone—on the shore see him stand,
As he bids him adieu with a wave of the hand.
Ah! a life is before thee, a life full of care,
Gentle youth, and mayhap thou wilt fall in its snare.
Can thy bark speed thee now, without wind, without
tide,
Without the kind angel, thy beautiful guide?
Ah, no! Then what lures thee, fair youth, to depart?
Must thou rush into danger from impulse of heart?
Lo! above, in the bright arch of heaven, I see
The vision, the aim, so alluring to thee.

Tis the Temple of Fame, with its pillars so fair,
And the Genius of Wisdom and Love reigneth there.
Advance, then, proud vessel, thy burden is light,
Swift speed thee, and guide his young steps in the right,
For in life's 'fitful changes' are many dark streams,
And the path unillumed by the sun's golden beams.

MANHOOD.

Now the tempest's fierce raging, with fury unbound,
O'er hill and o'er valley the whirlwinds surround;
But still that light bark speeds its way o'er the deep,
Unharmed as a babe in its cradle asleep.

But a form stands erect in the tempest-thronged boat,
As it glides o'er the tumult-stirred waters afloat—
Himself as the helmsman now guides it alone—
The prow it is broken, the angel is gone.

With look fixed and steady he seeks the wave path
Which deep, dark and deadly awakens in wrath.
Oh, what grief, oh, what sorrow, what mis'ry is this,
As he stands on the verge of a frightful abyss?

The angel with sorrow beholds him pass on,
Unheeding the danger whilst rushing along;
Adown the deep ravine the cataract roars,
Dashing onward and foaming in thunder it pours.

Ah! where has he fled? he is lost to our sight;
Has he perished, alas! that bright vision of light!
Ah, yes! he has vanished and left me alone,
And my bright hopes are blasted—like dreams they
are gone.

OLD AGE.

The tempest has passed, the dark clouds disappear,
And a bright beam assures us the angel is near;
On pinions he flies to the patriarch saint,
He needs his strong aid, for he's weary and faint.
Yes, the traveler benighted and lost to our view
Has returned, and the wave and the tempest passed
through;

And weary of life, and now longing for rest,
Seeks a home in *that mansion*, the brightest, the best.
See, the angel, his guardian, now stands by his side,
And points to the haven where all may abide,
Where the portals stand open, prepared to receive
All those who are weary and seek to believe.
From childhood to youth were his happiest years,
No sorrow or anguish, no tumults or fears.
All was bright! ay, the castles were built in the air,
Yet they fell but too soon, and they proved but too fair.
Then manhood with hopes full of buoyancy came,
And he sought with new impulse some soul-stirring aim,
But, alas! they proved futile; few years had passed o'er
Ere they sank to oblivion to spring forth no more.
Our life is a day, and our childhood's the dawn;
Then youth, with its vigor, the full blushing morn,
And manhood, with hopes that are blighted so soon,
Is the centre of life, the all-radiant noon;
Then age, obscure night, when, with sorrow oppressed,
We sink into sleep in the home of the blest.

CHAPTER II.

TEACHING was an honorable vocation, but it was Valera's theory that teachers were "to the manner born," and not made to order, and she shrank from the yoke that was placed on her shoulders, she felt her own incompetency so much, and had so little self-reliance and so few of the requirements necessary to successful school-teaching. But could she do anything besides that?

She groaned her negation and accepted the yoke. Valera smiled through her tears as she thought of her experience as a teacher in a public school. She had been used to an air of refinement—nothing in her education had

prepared her for this—and now the shock to her sensibilities almost overcame her and the odors were anything but agreeable. Lungs were the most powerful persuaders, but Valera's throat was weak, and she soon got hoarse in trying to maintain order.

The schoolhouse was the first that was built under the new management, and was in a sadly dilapidated condition, and in a location not easy of access to many but the squatter sovereignty whose territory is now covered by the Central Park. Fresh from the ship and the shanty, unwashed, unkempt, untrained, with every accent on their tongues and much evil in their hearts, they swarmed through the open door of knowledge and sat on the hard benches to learn the rudiments.

Valera stood on the lowest round of

the ladder, and had supreme control of the galleries, and as it was pleasanter in-doors than out on stifling summer days, the morning tally frequently ran as high as two hundred.

Four hundred eyes looking to one poor girl for help! How solemn a position it seemed to Valera as she took her place each morning and endeavored to train them to better thoughts and better deeds than they could learn in their own homes! She could not blame them for being restless when they were so crowded together, with barely elbow-room, though it made her duties all the heavier, and no sooner did she succeed in restoring order in one direction than a fresh disturbance broke out in another quarter.

The hardest lesson to teach, and the one most frequently to be enforced, was

that "order is Heaven's first law." With them it was confusion and chaos.

The schoolhouse was old and ill adapted to the requirements of the teachers. The sliding-doors which separated Valera's from the adjoining department were in a shackling condition, and let through more noises than they kept out, so that the scholars in Miss R——'s room, being fewer and more advanced, were continually annoyed by the disorder of Valera's untrained infantry.

All the assistance she had was an occasional monitor sent down from the female department, who generally proved more of a hindrance than a help, and Valera struggled in the face of these difficulties, putting the children as fast as possible through A, B, C, teaching them to string the letters into

words, and finally pushing them, with a feeling of intense satisfaction, through the door that led into a higher department of knowledge.

But Valera lost strength before she lost courage, and every day she tried to fight back these feelings which threatened to overcome her. She loved children, she was glad to be of use to them, but the burden never seemed to fit itself exactly to her shoulders, and she chafed under it continually.

“Mother, you will have to buy me a coffin if I am to keep on as I am doing,” she declared one day when her lungs felt particularly weak and irritated. “I cannot teach much longer.”

“Well, perhaps it won’t be necessary, Valera. If we move out of the city into a smaller house, I think it likely that in two years’ time we can

retrench sufficiently to move back again."

Oh, joy! It was something to look forward to—a release from what had become absolute torture. It might prove to be only a change from the pillory to the stocks, but in her present state of mind any change seemed an improvement.

Valera knew very well that there was no vocation so honorable as teaching, but if her heart could not be enlisted in the work, she felt that she was unjust to herself and her employers if she persisted in it. Evidently it was not her vocation. It was a trial for the family to break away from all their old and pleasant associations, and to leave unto strangers the home that was so sacred and dear unto them. There was not a room in the house but was

hallowed by some sweet memory, and the first sorrow was too fresh to have lost its influence even on inanimate objects.

But they had hope to sustain them, and what seemed grievous at the time might result in permanent blessing, so the "household gods" were transferred to unfamiliar quarters, and the air of home imparted to the dwelling they inhabited.

For a while Valera found plenty of occupation, though her duties were not of a kind that would be likely to satisfy one of her ambitious tendencies. Still, they were duties, and she enjoyed them for the time being, particularly as they were light and unembarrassing. She could sweep and dust, was not remarkably expert with her needle, and having a scarcity of material to work upon,

was soon back to the old questioning way.

“What a miserable creature I am!” she would say of herself; “I’m unhappy when I’m at work and unhappy when I’m idle! I do wonder what I was made for?”

In this unsettled condition, with no definite aim, with no bright spot to look forward to in her future, Valera existed, not lived, for there was little life in what she did, through the eighteen months of their sojourn in Brooklyn.

The rest and quiet had done her good, but aside from that she was not improved, nor could she hope to be, unless some door should open before her and point the way to future possibilities. I cannot tell why it never occurred to her to try the various gate-

ways of knowledge, in the hope of finding some vocation adapted to her peculiar need.

It might have been that she was, unconsciously, in a chrysalis condition, waiting for the full time of her development. Afterward she looked back to this period of time in wonder and amazement, and questioned her own identity. The force of circumstances compelled a return to the city in less time than they had anticipated, and in less hopeful condition. Neither were they permitted to enter again their old home, around whose fireside were clustered those dear memories whose fragrance floated through the pathway of the future. "Let us live plainly, let out part of the house if necessary, but keep no boarders," had been the verdict of the entire family, who wished

to preserve the sacredness and closeness of home ties.

Necessity began to compel Valera to leave off dreaming and take up something tangible, so just as she had bent to the yoke previously, she now took upon herself a seamstress' portion, and threaded her needle through blinding tears.

Valera a seamstress! She who could "botch" so much better than any of the rest of the family! "You can do it if you will," insisted one who knew Valera much better than she knew herself, and Valera *willed* to do well whatever she undertook, and succeeded. She succeeded in giving satisfaction to others, though she failed hopelessly in attempting to satisfy herself.

At last the latent longing began to manifest itself, broke through the shell

and uttered the first peep of recognition, for with her school-days Valera's poetical effusions had ceased altogether.

It was only a little bird; it might never sing very loud or soar very high, but it bore the olive-branch to Valera, and there was peace in her heart for a while.

Only for a while, for the latent power threatened to become despotic and to overthrow the not harmonious republic of Valera's heart.

What comfort she took with her pen!

These strange and sometimes beautiful thoughts that floated through her brain needed only to be transferred to paper and they were something visible. Imperfect productions, at the best, but they did Valera good. She was more cheerful, more contented; she was educating herself.

Busied with her needle from morning until dark, there was no opportunity for her pen until evening, and in the solitude of her own room she let her soul express itself.

Many a laugh had Valera over her first remunerative production. She had given several of her poetic effusions to the public, but had received nothing substantial in return. Imagine her delight when she returned from one of her expeditions and displayed the first fruits after months of industry—*fifty cents!* It was more than that to Valera, it was evidence of growth. There was no stand-still to her, and if she was worth that much in the beginning, she would be worth much more before she stopped. .

“Now, Valera,” said the mother, “if I were you, I’d buy something with

that money to keep always." And after much wondering and weighing, she purchased—a hand-mirror!

It is a magic mirror to her, truthful, reliable; it reveals the story of the past, the present and the future, what she was and is and hopes to be, and she never touches it but she thinks of those days of doubts, fears, difficulties and furnace-trials.

But, as I said, the dormant power had been aroused, and Valera was not strong enough to carry two such heavy weights as sewing and writing: it was already telling on her health, and her heavy eyelids in the morning would frequently elicit from the watchful mother: "Valera, you've had your head full of cogitations all night; I know by your looks." And Valera would have to confess her inability to

turn off "the machine" when once it got under full headway. She thought her pillow must be her inspiration, for as soon as she sought its rest every feather within seemed like a winged thought, on which she soared in every direction but toward the land of *Nod*.

Her needle grew hateful to her. Each day she took it up more reluctantly, and each night she speculated on the possibility of escaping from her bondage. But she was practical as well as poetical, and knew it would be foolish to give up certainty for uncertainty.

"You can't make it pay!" was all that held her back, and mechanically she pursued her labors through the night that seemed so dark, hoping that the morning would soon dawn, yet ever unable to still that agonizing cry of her soul: "Is this the best that I can do?"

CHAPTER III.

YOU must not imagine that Valera was infirm of purpose or wanting in necessary courage. She had an earnest desire to take part in the battle of life, but wanted a position assigned her where she could feel that she was accomplishing all that was required, and her conscientiousness prevented her from being satisfied with any half-way work.

She met with every discouragement at home on account of this new development of power, this whimsical idea that anything could be made out of her pen. It was a veritable case of *cacoethes scribendi*, and Valera con-

tinued to "spoil paper" as the only means of relief.

"I'll give you five dollars a year if you'll stop writing," said Walter, "and that's more than you'll ever earn."

"When are we to have the first book?" was a frequent interrogation, and Valera's blank pages were ornamented with every description of caudal appendages, and marked with astonishing capitals: "TALES: *By Valera.*"

"You can't expect to support yourself entirely with your pen," said the mother, who discouraged at the outset only because she dreaded a failure in the end. "The fountain is not inexhaustible; you would soon run out of ideas."

These discouraging expressions only served to make Valera still more desperate and determined, but she was

bound, like Tantalus, within sight of what she coveted, and powerless to take it in her grasp. Unfortunately for her, in the judgment of her friends her especial talent lay in making rhymes, and poetry was worse than a drug in the market, and her prose was not striking enough to command any marked attention or especial favor, though she turned her pen occasionally in that direction.

“So, you see, my dear girl,” wrote one whose advice Valera valued highly, “that prose—plain matter-of-fact prose—pays better than poetry, as I have long endeavored to convince you. Poetry will not pay in this degenerate age—at least nothing short of Longfellow, Tennyson or Whittier. So be a good girl; write prose for the stupid public and ‘put money in purse,’ and

save poetry for your friends who can appreciate you."

"But I write my best when I write poetry," said Valera, and so she persisted in her rhymes.

Her progress was gradual. Occasionally she found a brief notice like the following in one corner of the paper to which she contributed gratuitously, and it was worth more to her than money: it encouraged her to persevere:

"We have the pleasure of giving our readers this week another gem from the pen of the author of —, and the judgment of our friends has satisfied us of the justice of the encomiums we bestowed upon it."

Valera felt not a little pride in these tokens of appreciation, though she failed to convince Walter, who could not

detect the clink of silver, that they were anything more than empty words, a trumpet sound that never betokened victory. Valera wept and sighed over one weakness that fettered her fancy—the want of facility of expression. Words! words! words! she felt to be her greatest need, and wrote as if it were a prayer:

I long for words; when feeling these sensations,
I fain would paint what only words express,
But vain the prayer, and I must wait with patience,
And keep my thoughts unwritten in my breast.
I can but think that these aspiring feelings,
This hope of being what I long to be,
Are but the dim and shadowy revealings
Of what in future days may come to me.

And so she waited while she wrought, and dreamed, even as Jacob dreamed, of a ladder let down from heaven, with angels ascending and descending, and the angels ministered unto her.

She knew not at what fount to drink, and had no access to such literature as she required. How much she needed a strong, sympathizing friend!—one who could give her necessary counsel and help her to develop the “one talent,” which she felt in her inmost soul was the one for which God would demand improvement. Failing to find an earthly friend, she leaned more strongly toward the heavenly, and gained a larger supply of that wisdom which was to enrich and purify her soul.

Years ago her heart had confessed its reliance upon an infinite Redeemer, but she had never dared to confess him before men. She waited to be better, but she seemed to become every day more unworthy, and she besought him to seal her to himself that she might be more Christ-like.

This new, heavenly bond of union added much to Valera's strength, and opened to her new avenues of thought and culture. She had consecrated herself, her talents, her ambition. It was no longer a desire for name and fame, though Valera had never striven anxiously for either; henceforth she must be a worker in the vineyard, a helper in the establishing of Christ's kingdom, a soldier in the army which Satan was continually assailing. She would not "hang her harp upon the willows," but would stand upon the hilltop, as did Miriam, and sing her songs of rejoicing. I have not paused to tell through what straits she passed, what furnace-fires tried the metal of her spirit, how deep were the waters that had threatened to overwhelm her. A shadowed valley-path was hers, and she

had tried to walk meekly therein. She had not murmured at God's providences, she only asked for direction and strength.



CHAPTER IV.

AT the beginning of each new year Valera's longing for some more truthful expression of her capabilities became so intense as thoroughly to depress and dishearten her, especially as each succeeding year opened no wider vista, offered no more extended field of usefulness, than that which she already occupied. She wondered at her own continuity, but Valera's perseverance had passed into a proverb in the family. It used to be obstinacy before she had put herself under discipline.

Just as everything was at its darkest, health and spirits at their lowest ebb, Valera received a communication solicit-

ing her to undertake missionary duties in connection with the New York Sunday-school Union.

Valera a missionary! It was the last thing she had ever thought of undertaking; she was peculiarly unfitted for the work, and felt that it would be almost sinful for her to undertake to preach Christ, when she had need to be taught herself.

Besides, religion was to her something especially sacred, not to be exhibited to gratify public curiosity or private speculation, and she felt a natural restraint at intruding upon the privacy of others. Her spiritual thoughts and feelings, the inner sanctuary of her life, was the "holy of holies" into which she always entered with veiled face and a throbbing heart.

But it was not a mere matter of

personal emotion ; there was something as tangible as dollars and cents connected with it, and that had weight with Valera, though she shrank from undertaking such holy work from any such unholy motive.

“Take time to consider,” wrote the secretary, “and consult with your friends,” but Valera did not care to try her friends in any such emergency. Whatever she undertook must be at her own risk, that in case of failure she might not be induced to regret that she had listened to the opinions of others. She looked the thing squarely in the face ; with her vivid imagination it was easy to fancy herself already engaged in the work, though she had no practical knowledge of the duties she was asked to assume. Previous experiences had shown her that noth-

ing was ever accomplished without considerable self-sacrifice, and mission-work required complete self-abnegation. Was she equal to it? She sought counsel of her heavenly Father, casting herself at his feet in an agony of tearful supplication. "What wilt *thou* have me to do?" was the question continually uppermost in her thoughts, and she was afraid to turn away from this *open door*, for fear she would be denying her discipleship. Is this the answer? Must I undertake? Shall I have strength and ability to continue? for Valera was loth to assume responsibilities only to shake them off when they became burdensome, and the peace that stole over her perturbed spirit she accepted as a decision from on high, and was satisfied.

He would help her as he had helped

his disciples hitherto ; she had only to call and he would answer.

Then she consulted her friends, who one and all, as she knew they would, opposed the undertaking as unsuited to her physical organization, and wondered at her temerity.

But she was not to be dissuaded. It was to educate her, and education was what she needed. Valera took her first lesson in missionary work in the company of a lady whose place she was expected to occupy.

“ I’ll go with you to the worst places,” said Mrs. Wade, “ and then you need not go again in some time. That house,” she continued, pointing to a frame building they were about passing, “ I wouldn’t advise you to go in at all ; they threatened my life and drove me from the house.”

Valera quietly tried her armor to see if it was equal to any such contest, and followed her guide without speaking. She was a plain, practical woman, this Mrs. Wade, a clergyman's wife, a live Christian, thoroughly energetic and interested in the work of reclaiming and converting sinners.

I hardly need tell you that when Valera went to her task single-handed, her first visit was to the very house against which she had been cautioned by Mrs. Wade.

"If I have to face any danger in the prosecution of my work," said Valera, "I'll do it at the outset, and not let my imagination make a bugbear to frighten me off my territory."

The front basement, where she entered, was occupied by Irish Catholics, bigoted, she knew, the moment she ad-

dressed them, and ready to fight with words or weapons.

Valera was cautious, spoke to them respectfully, gained what information she required, and left them exclaiming, in the highest tones of Milesian admiration:

“Indade, and that’s a lady, every inch of her, and not a bit like the other one! Ah, if *she* comes again, I’ll chase her out of the house with this iron, and let her feel the weight of it too!”

“I made up my mind,” said another of the group, “I’d never have another of those *track* visitors enter that door, but, sure, I wouldn’t care, if they were all like this one.”

Valera was forced to listen to these remarks while she was waiting admittance into the back basement, where she met with a perfect contrast to the

occupants of the front room. This was an English family, consisting of three children and two widows, adherents of the Church of England, and without friends or acquaintances nearer than Canada.

The room was small, dark and imperfectly ventilated, contained two beds, a stove and several trunks, and looked out on a dismal prospect of stable-yard and filthy surroundings. They were modest women, striving to earn enough to provide a better home, with the hope of some day reaching their friends in Canada.

A sweet little child—one of those bright flowers that occasionally find growth in the midst of wretchedness and squalor—made the sunshine of the place, and created an interest in Valera that was appreciated and appropriated

by the entire household. The pretty pictures removed all formality, and, with the child at her knee, Valera won the confidence of the mother, and was enabled to give sympathy and advice and to obtain a foothold and a welcome among the suffering poor.

To give a better idea of her work it will be necessary to transfer several pages of her journal, after she had compassed some of the difficulties that met her in the way. She had, as it were, felt the pulse of her entire district, and was now prepared to give such medicine as she thought adapted to each individual case. Her Master had given her this work to do, and she walked only in his strength.

Her impotence of speech was met with this consolation: "Take ye no thought how or what thing ye shall

answer, or what ye shall say: for the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say," and trusting to this directorship, she went out boldly into the highways and byways in search of the lost and neglected.



CHAPTER V.

JUNE 3.—Consulted my list of special cases, and decided to call at — Washington street, where there was a man lying sick with consumption.

It was a low basement room which I entered, but everything was neat and comfortable. On a narrow bed lay the sick man in an uneasy sleep. It was painful to see him gasp for breath. I entered into conversation with his wife, and ascertained that he had lung fever, and had been failing for the past two years. About six months ago, when he had regained strength sufficient to walk short distances, he was

knocked down by a cart driven by some boys, and his ribs broken and thigh dislocated. He is now helpless, and no earthly remedy can arrest the progress of the disease that is sapping the fountains of life.

On awaking and being told who I was, he expressed his regret that Mrs. Wade had left the city without calling upon him. He had been expecting her. While I talked with him of the Saviour who could so strengthen his soul that it could overcome the weakness of the body, the tears filled his eyes, and in broken sentences he gave utterance to the faith that was strong within him.

“No one knows,” he said, “what I suffer.”

“No one but your heavenly Father, whose ear is ever open to hear your cry.”



The City Missionary.

He spoke of his approaching end, which he thought could not be over a fortnight distant, and as I rose to go he turned his eyes pleadingly upon me, and articulated something that I did not distinctly hear, so I bent my head lower.

“Will you lead in prayer?” were the whispered words of request.

I had never made an audible supplication to the Almighty. Could I, so infirm of speech, carry the hearts of these, my seniors in the church, toward the mercy-seat?

Could I refuse the request?

I knelt. I scarcely know what I said, but it was weak and stammering—a very child’s prayer. I could hear the sobs of the sick man, and they made me hope that my feeble utterances might, through the grace of the Holy Spirit,

cause him to feel the nearness of a Saviour.

“Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”

He seemed gratified, when I arose called me “sister” and asked me to come soon again. His wife seconded the request.

More than ever did I feel my own weakness and ignorance.

Bless, O Lord, this effort made in the right direction; help me to bear the cross, and to trust thee to the end.

June 11.—Called again on Mr. P——. He had been worse since my last call, but was now able to sit up. Mrs. P—— was quite ill. The care of her husband is a severe tax on her strength, and she seems completely worn out.

"You are still here," I said, addressing the invalid.

"Yes, waiting the Lord's time."

"When we learn to be submissive to his will, his time is always ours."

"I don't want to die. I'd like to live as long as the Lord is willing."

"Death is not pleasant to think of. We cannot divest it of its terrors, but grace is given at the dying hour, and even those who have lived all their lives in fear of death are strengthened to meet the king of terrors."

I read the hymn, "Jesus, lover of my soul," dwelling on the last verse: "Thou, O Christ, art all I want." Then I offered up a prayer, and besought our heavenly Father that he would strengthen us in all the duties of life, and enable us to overcome the world, that at the dying hour we might, pros-

trate at the foot of Calvary, cast our burdens aside, and be received into mansions above for Christ's sake.

June 15.—Mary Sutton, an interesting Irish woman, resides at the corner of C—— and W—— streets.

We conversed for some time on ordinary topics. Her youngest child, a bright little girl of three years, being readily won to my side, made the way easy to the mother's heart.

She mentioned her desire to be a Christian, and, with the tears raining down her cheeks, expressed the regret that had been weighing on her mind for some time that she had delayed so long making any effort toward religious improvement. I assured her it was not too late; that a loving Saviour may have knocked at the door of her heart

many times, and if she did not admit him now, he might never return.

I read to her the "hand-bill" entitled "Your Soul," which seemed to touch her deeply. She is evidently a conscientious, right-minded woman, and though I may be unable to bring her within the fold of the true Church, I may, by God's blessing, strengthen her in her purpose to become a disciple of Christ.

She thanked me for my "kind conversation," hoped my prayers for her would be answered, and urged me to call on her frequently.

June 22.—Having neglected to ask the name of this woman, as I usually do of those in whom I am interested, and being obliged to visit in the same house to-day, I knocked at the door of her room.

Mrs. Sutton admitted me, and seemed very much embarrassed that I should find her room in such confusion. I begged her not to distress herself, and made my errand known.

“You have a Bible, I suppose?” was my next inquiry.

“No, I have not. I ought to have one, I know, but we are poor, and it’s hard to spare the money.”

“I am sorry you have none,” I said; “but here is a copy of St. John’s Gospel: it is beautiful, and I know if you read it it will give you a great deal of comfort. You know that John was the beloved disciple.”

“Oh yes; I read the life of ‘Elizabeth of Hungary.’ She was a rich woman, but she felt her sins were great, and she kept close to St. John, and through his intercession she was

pardoned. She did great penance, and is now one of the first saints."

"Don't put too much confidence in the saints," I said. "You can go right to the Saviour."

I wrote her name in the little book, with the date, and the text: "The entrance of thy word giveth light."

She was desirous of having my own name, which I wrote underneath hers.

"I am very, very grateful," she said, "and I will keep it as long as I live, and always think of you."

It must be no fault of mine if this proves to be seed sown on stony ground.

June 28.—Mary Sutton was pleased to see me, and her little girl immediately took her station at my side. She had read St. John's Gospel, and thought it "very good."

“Indeed,” said she, “wherever I see the name of Jesus I love to read.”

Her humility does not forsake her, and leaving her wash-tub, she sat at my side a willing listener. It was dinner-time when I called, and a young woman who is boarding with her temporarily came in and joined in the conversation. She is a strong Roman Catholic, but sensible withal.

“Mrs. Sutton always feels better after you have called,” she said, and I felt that the Master was blessing my labors.



CHAPTER VI.

JUNE 6.—I have really been refreshed to-day by a conversation with a young Englishwoman, the most cheerful Christian it has ever been my privilege to meet. She made me acquainted with some portions of her early life, which I will give, as nearly as possible, in her own words :

“ I worked out in London for a number of years. At one time I was housemaid in the family of the principal of the mercantile school. While there I had a fright which threw me into epilepsy, and I have been subject to fits ever since.

“ The cook and I were at supper ;

the kitchen was in a wing attached to the main building, and was lit and ventilated by a skylight. Two men who had been building a still without a license were found out, and a policeman was sent to arrest them.

“One of the men, in endeavoring to escape, fell through the skylight into the kitchen. Poor fellow! I could not help feeling sorry for him, but it was a mercy cook and I were not killed.”

“How did it affect the cook?” I inquired.

“Her hair turned white in twenty-four hours.

“I have only been in this country since last August,” she continued. “My husband brought me here, thinking a change of climate would benefit my health. I prayed God to spare my life

that I might devote it to his service, and I think he will restore me. I feel as though I shall be well some time, and able to do more good than I can in my present state of health.

“My husband and I joined the —— Street Methodist Church, and our time of probation expires this month. You may be surprised that we should unite with that church, when, at home, we were attendants of the Church of England.”

“It must seem quite different.”

“We went to several churches, and there seemed to be so much more fellowship among the Methodists that we felt at home nowhere else. We came here perfect strangers, but it seems as though God had led us, and we do enjoy our church and our religious meetings so much! I tell my husband

it seems as though there had been a strong arm around me to keep me away from the world. I am never unhappy, and it would be the delight of my life to go, as you do, among the poor and do something for my Saviour.

“I will tell you, though perhaps I ought not to say it, that out of a very large family I am the only one who has shown any inclination to do right. My mother is fond of drink and my father is a bad man, so it seems as if God had singled me out. I did not write to my mother that I had joined with the Methodists, for it would only distress her, and she would say, ‘No good ever came of those chapel people.’

“My husband was not satisfied until he had taken a class in Sabbath-school. Everybody loves him. He has secured a nice situation, and on the first of May,

as this room and bedroom were to let, we took them, for we were tired of boarding. We have gathered but a few things together; they are humble, but they are *ours*."

When I looked around that abode—the carpet not covering the floor, but guiltless of stain or speck, and everything neat, though humble enough—I felt that a murmur should never pass the lips of those who have more to be thankful for, and yet are not half as grateful or as happy as this sweet Christian woman.

June 7.—In perfect contrast to this was the call I made on a Mrs. H——, who has a temporary home with a friend in C—— street.

Finding there were no young children to gather into Sabbath-schools,

I inquired if they themselves attended church.

“Not very often,” was the reply, “though we have been members of the Methodist Church.”

“Have been?” I said as I accepted their invitation to sit down; “I don’t like that tense very well. What do you mean?”

“We are backsliders.”

“I cannot see how any one, having been once under grace, can get rid of the feeling or neglect the duties of religion. The Bible says nothing of being born a third time.”

“It was carelessness on my part, in the first place,” said Mrs. N——. “I stayed away from my class and from church, and as no one came to see after me, I grew indifferent, and now I seldom, if ever, go to church.”

I spoke to her of the sin of carelessness in religious duties, and advised her to return to her church without delay.

“I feel more concerned about my friend here,” she said, turning to a middle-aged woman who had been a silent but interested listener to our conversation.

I asked Mrs. H—— why she thought she had fallen from grace, and she confided to me the story of her trials.

She came from London against the wishes of her friends, determined to follow the fortunes of her husband, who was anxious to visit America. They had one little daughter, the idol of the mother’s heart, and shortly after their arrival here the little one sickened and died. The wife had doubts of her husband’s fidelity, and separated from him. Her minister, whom she had often be-

friended, showed no sympathy for her in her trials, but increased her sense of injury by retaining the friendship of the husband. She felt as though the doors of the church were closed against her.

She rented apartments, and feeling her lonely condition, consented to take in a young girl who was desirous of having a room where she could operate on the sewing-machine. This person took her departure one night with a quantity of wearing apparel and some valuables belonging to Mrs. H——, and it seemed after that as though she lost faith in God and man. She was in the “slough of despond,” and needed some strong arm to help her out of her troubles.

I mentioned the efficacy of prayer.

“I must have something to do,” she

said—"something to take my mind off my troubles."

She seemed willing to confide in me, and Mrs. N—— thought I had come in answer to a dream she had had the night before.

I promised to do all that lay in my power for her temporal assistance, and besought her to remember that God had not forsaken her, "for whom he loveth he chasteneth."

I called, in reference to this case, on Mrs. Zabriskie, thinking there might be a vacancy in the "Patriot Orphan's Home" which she was competent to fill. Failing there, I went to several friends, who manifested an interest in the case, but could promise nothing, so I was obliged at my next call to tell her of my disappointment and ask her to be patient.

June 20.—Called on an English friend who happens to live in my district. In the course of conversation she mentioned the trouble she had with servants, and said the girl she had was only waiting for her to supply her place.

I had gone there with the intention of enlisting her sympathy in Mrs. H——, and here was just what I sought. She said it would suit her exactly to take this afflicted one into her home, and though in the capacity of a servant, she would assure her of sympathy and kindness and the comforts of a home, besides many privileges which she could not but appreciate.

It was a pleasure for me to bear these good tidings to Mrs. H——, and not seeing her, I mentioned the arrangement to her friend, who promised to

do all she could toward inducing Mrs. H—— to take advantage of this opening.

My friend Mrs. B—— called on the 21st to tell me that Mrs. H—— had been to see her, and had consented to accept the situation that was offered, and was very anxious that Mrs. B—— should let me know. She was very humble, and willing to do anything that was required of her. She told Mrs. B—— that she loved me dearly, prayed for me every day, and for my sake was willing to make many sacrifices.

It is something gained if she acknowledges the efficacy of prayer, and I hope that the health of her soul will be restored, and that she will take her place among his chosen ones.

CHAPTER VII.

JUNE 13.—On Sunday the 12th one of my mission scholars whispered to me that her mother would like me to call on her soon. Fearful that it might be something urgent, I called the next day, when she made me acquainted with a case of destitution to which I had not attended, although it was in a part of my district already visited. Her little daughter accompanied me across the street, and as we entered the house it occurred to me how I had missed visiting this family. The house has but two stories and an attic, and I remember well that the day I visited there I looked up the stairs,

and hearing no sign of life, concluded it was but an open garret. The dilapidated condition of the side wall and the rough appearance of the rafters satisfied me that nothing human had a habitation there. But I was mistaken.

We went up into this open garret, around which were some rooms used for storage, and rapping at the door of one at the extreme end, it was opened by a clean-looking German woman.

Her little girl was amusing herself washing away on a tiny washboard, and was the very embodiment of sunshine.

The room was small, and had but one window, looking out on a dead wall and a dirty alley. In one corner stood the stove, and two tables—one was a sort of stand with drawers—and

three dilapidated chairs completed the furniture.

Everything was as clean as soap and water could make it, though Mrs. S—— apologized for the appearance of the floor, which, on account of the knots in the planks, it was impossible to make white.

I need not repeat her story verbatim. It is a very old one.

Her young days were spent in Hanover, in the midst of comforts she had never known since leaving that place. Her father came to this country and was known as "the French physician," and made quite a reputation. A protracted illness obliged an expenditure that soon exhausted his small means, and his wife and family, who had joined him to share his fortunes in America, were thrown upon the world.

At that time Mrs. S—— was a widow with one child. The father having been a Freemason in the old country, the society here adopted the wife as “half sister,” and still continue to her a small allowance.

The brother, scarcely able to support his own family, urged the sister to marry again, in order to provide a home for herself and little one.

“God forgive me, my lady! I did not marry for love; I married for a home.”

Her first husband was a wretched drunkard, and this one proved no better.

She is dependent entirely on the labor of her hands, and has such a dread of the poorhouse that she declares she will work for her child “until the blood spirts out of her finger ends!”

“Sometimes,” she said, “I sit and think about my young days, and I cry and cry, and I cannot help it.”

She opened one of the drawers in the stand which served as a cupboard; a few bits of bread was all it contained, and she had been forced to beg for some of those.

“As true as I live,” she said, “I have not tasted meat in more than a month, and sugar I never buy. A little coffee and bread we have at every meal. Once in a great while I get a few potatoes and an onion, and chop them up together and fry them. Oh, I like that very much, but we don’t have it often. Then I get a little flour and some milk, and mix them up and drop them into water like dumplings. That’s our Sunday dinner.”

She took me into a small room ad-

joining, where she and her little girl slept. The sheet and pillow-cases were clean but coarse, the coverlet would not have shamed Joseph's coat, and the original material was lost in the multitude of patches.

Unable to renew the straw in the bed, which had become so fine as to be but little protection from the slats, she had supplied the place with shavings, and seemed really proud of her ingenuity. She is not ashamed of her poverty, and all she desires is some permanent employment by which she can earn enough to pay her rent and keep herself and child out of the poorhouse. Unfortunately, she has no knowledge of sewing, and is not strong enough to do heavy work. I could not promise her anything, but told her to pray and not to faint.

“Oh, I do,” she said; “but I might kneel by that table all day, and if I didn’t work, it wouldn’t bring me a meal of victuals.”

I gave her a trifle of money, and promised to call often and see how she fared. She is a member of the Lutheran Church, and evidently carries religion into her daily life.

— Called again on Mrs. Sutton. She had managed to earn about one dollar this week, and was quite cheerful in consequence. She does not allow herself to be discouraged, but when she has nothing to do is always expecting a call. Her stock of provisions was very low indeed, consisting of some bits of bread, which she had purposed making into soup, and one end of smoked beef.

I told her I was unable to do much

for her, but would see that she was not suffering.

“Don’t mind,” she said, laying her hand on my shoulder. “I love to have you come in ; it does me good.”

She is anxious to unite with some church where she can feel free to go and hear the word of God preached.

I purchased and sent to her a package of flour and a loaf of bread.

On Sunday morning she and her little girl were in my class at mission school. I had invited her to come, and was really pleased at this proof of the sincerity of her promise.

CHAPTER VIII.

JUNE 9.—Found a poor woman, Mrs. Welsh, an Irish Catholic, who has been confined to her bed for six weeks with different ailments, and is now almost helpless from rheumatism.

Read a tract and left it with her. Finding she had no Bible, I promised, with her consent, to furnish her with one, which duty I performed the next day.

As she seemed weak for want of nourishing food, I purchased a small amount of beef, and gave the daughter directions for making beef-tea.

Called again the following Saturday, and was surprised at Mrs. Welsh's ask-

ing me to retake the Bible, as her brother-in-law did not wish her to keep it. Hoped I would not be angry.

Truly, "a man's worst enemies are those of his own household."

Read a chapter from St. John, with which she seemed pleased, and whose comforting assurances she evidently appreciated.

Being disabled herself, her present dependence is on her son, a lad of thirteen years and the oldest of three children, whose wages are two dollars a week, with a prospect of their being raised to three dollars.

— Called on Mrs. Welsh, and gave her one dollar. She was very grateful; she needed it very much to purchase medicines. Hoped God would bless me, and said she would pray for me.

I need the prayers of even this poor woman.

— Called on Mrs. Lawson. Her husband died quite suddenly on Sunday, May 22, leaving her in an almost destitute condition. His sister, a dress-maker in Philadelphia, to whom she had telegraphed, came on too late for the funeral, and was surprised to find her brother's wife in such a wretched place. She obtained the mother's consent to take the little girl home with her, promising to exert herself to procure employment for Mrs. Lawson in Philadelphia as soon as the prospects began to brighten.

The husband, although not a professing Christian, was particular to have his children repeat their prayers every night and morning. While dying he repeated the Lord's Prayer and part

of the twenty-third Psalm, and while the sweet utterances of David were quivering on his pallid lips the waiting spirit bore the trembling soul heavenward. The widow's trust in God and his promises was strengthened by this dispensation, and she says, "He keeps me from despair."

June 30.—The entrance to this dwelling is on a side street, and as I reached the upper landing a woman met me whose accent betrayed her nationality. She said she was a Roman Catholic.

"I hope you are a good Catholic," I said, "and trying to be a good Christian?"

"I wouldn't like to say I was, for I don't think I am very good," was her reply.

"I am glad that you are humble."

"Indeed, I see so many worse than

myself I don't think I'm so bad, after all."

I had given her credit for what she did not possess, and a glance at her eyes satisfying me she was deceitful also, I did not care to prolong the conversation, but inquired if there were other families on the same floor.

She directed me to a room in which she said there was a sick lady. I feared being intrusive, not knowing whom I was to meet, and this woman's manner discouraged me.

However, I hesitated but a moment, and then entered a large room which was neatly and comfortably furnished. In the bedroom adjoining lay the invalid. I introduced myself, and took a seat upon a chest by the head of the bed.

She was a young woman, but little

older than myself, yet had buried one husband and seven children.

Apparently convinced of my sympathy, she told me, unsolicited, the story of her life, and said: "I have never told any one as much as I have told you. I don't know why it is."

"I am glad you feel free to tell me. It interests me, and I can assure you of my sincere sympathy." She spoke of her health, which had failed very much during the past year. She is suffering from chronic rheumatism, and the joints of her fingers are terribly swollen, and it has affected her whole system.

While she talked with me she was obliged to change her position frequently, and when I spoke of leaving, lest I should weary her by remaining longer, she urged me not to go.

“I don’t think I shall live very long,” she said, while speaking of the change that one year had produced.

“Are you prepared to die?” I asked.

“I don’t think I am,” was the tearful reply.

“Then you are not a professor of religion?”

“No, and I have not even attended church regularly. I seem to grow more and more wicked every year.”

“Have you had no convictions of sin?”

“Yes, I think I have, but when I feel well and strong, they pass away, and I go on the same as ever.”

I urged the matter of personal salvation upon her serious consideration, and selecting a tract entitled “The Lost Soul,” I slipped it under her pillow for her to read in private.

“Try and come as often as you can,” she pleaded as she held my hand at parting, and seemed loth to have me leave her.

The next day I called in for a moment to see how she had rested. I found her sitting up and looking very bright.

“I was afraid you over-exerted yourself yesterday,” I said, “and might be worse, so I called, thinking the day would seem less lonely.”

“Oh, it will,” she said, gratefully; “I am so glad to see you. Your call did me so much good, I was quite strong afterward. You have scarcely been out of my mind since you were here.”

She spoke of the associates she had had for the past six years, who had tended to corrupt her mind, though

she thought they had not polluted her heart. She seemed thoughtful when I spoke of her eternal interests, and promised to make an effort toward holy living.

“When will you come again?” was her inquiry as I rose to go. I smiled at her anxiety.

“Will it gratify you to know what day to expect me?” I asked.

“Oh no, if it’s only soon,” was the reply.

July 5.—Called again on Mrs. Carleton.

Her attachment to me seems very sincere, and on account of this hold I have on her affections, I trust I shall be able to lead her toward a better life. She has about decided to remove to Philadelphia, where she has some friends, and from thence, purposes

joining her husband in California as soon as she hears of his safe arrival.

Her anxiety concerning him so occupies her mind that she acknowledges she gives but little attention to her soul's welfare. Yet her desire is to be a Christian, and she expressed a wish that she had known me earlier, for she dreaded the parting from me. She spoke so often and so feelingly of her reluctance at parting with me that I offered to correspond with her if it would afford her any gratification.

I also loaned her Boardman's "Great Question," and urged its careful perusal.



CHAPTER IX.

THE strength of the Romish Church is its unity, but fear is the controlling power with the majority of its worshipers, and there is a great diversity of opinion among them in regard to the amount of belief which it is necessary to have in their spiritual confessor.

One man said to me that if a stranger came into the city, and asked to be shown to a Protestant church, you would have to inquire whether he was a Methodist, or a Presbyterian, or an Episcopalian, but if he asked to be directed to a Catholic church, there would be no need of any such ques-

tions. The following conversation, which amused and interested me at the time of its occurrence, will come in very appropriately here.

June 17.—The door at which I rapped was opened by a young girl, who set down the pail she held in her hand while she answered my questions. A woman whom I judged to be her mother walked back and forth from the door to the stove, where the dinner was in process of cooking. I spoke of Christian duties and the necessity of honoring God in our daily living: “Being Catholics will not hinder your being Christians.”

“One of your missionaries,” said the girl, “called on a Catholic lady, and a real good Christian too, and of course the conversation turned on religion.

“‘See how our church prospers!’ said the lady.

“‘Yes,’ said he, ‘the works of the devil always do prosper.’

“Why, if he’d said that to me, I’d have kicked him down stairs!” and her manner gave point to the assertion.

“You would?” I asked, deprecatingly. “Then you are not a Christian.”

“Well,” she said, slightly abashed, “he’d have gone down stairs quicker than he came up. He had no business to say any such thing.”

“He may have been over-zealous, but that would have been no excuse for you. Now,” I added, as I fortified myself in a new position against the side of the door, for neither mother nor daughter offered me a chair, “I don’t want you to kick me down stairs,

but I would like to talk with you about your Church and its errors. You confess to a priest, who is only a man, and not different from our ministers, yet we do not confess to them."

"Well, the priest never marries. You don't suppose I'd confess to a married man?"

I could not appreciate the distinction.

"You are more afraid of the priest than you are of God," I continued.

"Well, because I know I've got to tell him everything."

"But God knows it all beforehand. You have read of the miracles performed by Christ?"

"Oh yes!" was the response from mother and daughter.

"The woman who met him at the well, the woman who touched the hem of his garment, did not confess their

sins, but he read their hearts before they opened their mouths."

"And there was Mary Magdalene," said the young girl; "she was the vilest woman that ever lived, and she confessed, and had to do penance, and now she is one of the first saints."

"It says nothing like that in the Bible, I'm sure."

"Ah," said the old woman, "I guess there's many things in our Bible that's not in yours."

"I presume so, but we have no reason to suppose that Mary Magdalene was such a sinner as you say, but her humility made her feel how unworthy she was."

I had preached a short sermon from the text: "God knoweth the heart."

The girl was thoughtful, and listened to me more calmly than I expected,

and did not take offence at my plain speaking.

She is ignorant, however, being blinded.

I have spoken with others who denied that their worship was idolatry, for "we know," said one girl, "we have but one God, and one Saviour, and to him alone we pray."

July 8.—Called on Mary Sutton, and had a long and interesting conversation with her. Feeling the necessity of her having the word of God, I presented her with a copy, and asked, as a particular favor, that she would study its contents. She was more than grateful, and said she knew her husband would be pleased, and she thought she would be able to prevail on him to read it, at least every evening.

I have not met with another such anxious inquirer or willing listener to the truth, and if I can only eradicate from her mind those errors of the Romish Church, and convince her that the safety of her soul does not depend on outward forms, the most difficult task will be accomplished. Her personal regard for me is my great encouragement, and if prayer and persistent effort can accomplish anything, I shall not fail here.

Sept. 3.—Mrs. Sutton not as approachable as she has been; think she is influenced by the friend, a strong Romanist, who is making her home with her for the present.

July 11.—Mrs. Carleton watching for my coming. Says I am associated with all her thoughts of religion. It sounds

strange, but if God has endowed me with the capacity for winning hearts, he may grant me the higher gratification of winning souls that shall be the stars in my crown of rejoicing. I cautioned her against allowing her interest in me personally to cause her to forget my mission. "It is your soul I am seeking," I said.

"I know it," she replied, "and if I did not feel interested in you, I could not listen to you as I do. Last night, when it stormed so hard, I was thinking of you, and I was certain you would be here this morning, and I am glad you have come."

"Do you know the hymn, 'Jesus, I my cross have taken'?" I asked.

She nodded, for the tears filling her eyes prevented speech.

"Think of that hymn when you

think of me, for it is scarcely ever out of my mind."

She held my hand, loth to part, and as I turned in descending the stairs I saw her still watching, as though she would fain detain me.

She is very tender-hearted, and has the elements of a fine Christian character. God knows how long the Spirit must strive.

July 18.—Called again on Mrs. Carleton.

She leaves for Philadelphia on Tuesday or Wednesday, where she intends remaining until she joins her husband in California.

She had perused the "Great Question," but could not in words tell me how it had affected her.

"I cannot converse on religious sub-

jects," she said, "neither can I tell you how grateful I feel toward you, nor how great an influence you have over me. I will write you a long letter from Philadelphia and tell you just how I feel."

"I know it will be good news."

An incident connected with her early life may not be amiss, and will show how slight a thing may prove the turning-point in one's life.

She was interested in religion, and, unknown to her parents, had been, in company with some young friends, attending evening meetings in a Methodist church. She was to give in her experience, but when the moment arrived her nervousness overcame her, and she was unable to articulate one word. One of the elders, with whose family she was acquainted, and who

knew the state of mind she had been in, exclaimed fiercely : " Let her alone ! Satan hath taken hold upon her ! " Injured feeling, as well as personal pride, obtained a mastery, and she left the church determined never to enter its doors again.

The bitter feeling died out in a few years, and she prevailed on her husband to attend service with her in the sanctuary where she had come so near finding a Saviour.

She was recognized by the elder, who came forward and apologized for his rude speech, which had wounded so deeply, saying, " The devil must have tempted me. "

He was forgiven, but would he not have been held responsible if no day of grace had dawned upon that heart again ?

CHAPTER X.

SEPT. 2.—Resuming my calls after a month's vacation, I stopped to inquire after the health of Mrs. Carleton, and to ascertain, if possible, why she had not written me as she promised. I was surprised to find her at home, too much of an invalid to travel any distance. I had a brief conversation with her. The pain of body and anxiety of mind seem to prevent any connected thought or serious meditation. She feels in a confused state, which prayer has as yet failed to remove. I urged her to greater earnestness and more constant reading of Scripture.

On the following morning, being

detained at home by the inclement weather, I penned a note to Mrs. Carleton, pointing her to the cross, her only hope of salvation. In the afternoon I called, but did not see her, so left the note, which I trust may be blessed as an instrument in the hands of Him who is omnipotent. May she hear the "still, small voice," and may an awakened conscience lead her to the feet of a risen Redeemer!

Several days elapsed before I called again, and was again disappointed at not seeing Mrs. Carleton. This occurred two or three times, and I was afraid evil influences were at work, her husband's relatives being Roman Catholics. I felt much discouraged. The following note, which I received on the 28th, seemed to come in answer to my prayer, and I "thanked God and took courage."

SEPT. 28, 1864.

“MY DEAR FRIEND: Could you but know the pleasure I derive from your friendly visits and counsel, you might imagine how great was my disappointment at being so inopportunately out on business when you last called, and I feel impelled to vent my disappointment by writing to you.

“Your visits have been my *only* pleasurable anticipation; they have brought with them many reminiscences of early days which but for them might have died with me; they recall the innocent days of girlhood, when the guiles of life, to which we are all subject, were but phantoms, and when every thought was one of innocence. Although I consider myself above the average moral status, yet your beautiful letter has brought the conviction that, however

morally upright we may judge ourselves and be judged, there is still lacking that love for Jesus and trust in him which alone can calm the fear of dissolution, and render us happy and truthful in the great change to which we are ultimately tending.

“Your letter, my dear friend, has awakened in my mind desires which have long slumbered—to conform myself, as much as in me lies, to the precepts of that Saviour who so suffered and died for us, to feel that he is *my* Saviour, and placing my trust in him, abide by his intercession. I trust I have found that conviction which leads to the feet of the Lord, and you, my dear friend, I consider as my guide.

“Could I but convey to you my thanks for your kind services through this *very imperfect* rendering of my

thought, I should be gratified; my total inability adequately to do so is painfully apparent to myself. Will you, therefore, seeing how poor I am in expression, give me credit for *many, many* thanks I cannot utter? and I trust that when next you call I may be able to see you, to press your hand in a sister's grasp, and to thank you in person for your performance of your Christian duty toward

“ADA B. CARLETON.”

— Parted with Mrs. Carleton on board the steamer bound for California, and left in her hand the following poem, that expressed all I wanted to say much better than I could say it with my lips.

“I lay my hand in thine, and say
The parting word with pain;

We met as strangers yesterday,
We may not meet again.

"I ne'er may look upon thy face,
Or speak a word of cheer,
Or to thy sorrows ever lend
A sympathizing ear.

"But ever on thy onward path,
If weal or woe be thine,
Thou wilt not find a truer friend,
Or truer heart than mine.

"I do not covet wealth for thee,
Or joys that must depart;
They charm us for a while, but fail
To satisfy the heart.

"I fain would lead thee to the cross
On which the Saviour died,
And say, 'For thee, poor sinful one,
Was Jesus crucified.'

"And urge thee, ere the night be spent,
The day of grace be fled,
To seek the Saviour's proffered love,
And so be comforted.

"Then with thy heart renewed by grace,
Thy many sins forgiven,
Thou shalt secure eternal rest,
Thy heritage in heaven."

CHAPTER XI.

JULY 22.—It has been my good fortune in all my visits to meet with none, even those most depraved, who did not acknowledge their dependence on God and the necessity of doing his will in order to attain to everlasting life.

Many, too many, confess with their lips, while their lives bear witness to the fact that the love of God is not in their hearts nor the fear of him before their eyes.

Pursuing my accustomed round, I entered a basement room in a first-class tenant house, where everything betokened comfort and comparative ease.

After introducing myself to the one I imagined to be mistress of the house, I commenced conversation by inquiring if she attended church.

"No, never!" was the reply, in a most decided tone.

"Never attend church nor have any religious duties! How can you be happy?" I asked.

"I'm as happy as a king!"

"But I presume the king attends church. What do you suppose constitutes happiness?"

"Why, eating and drinking and having your health."

"Well, health is an important source of happiness, I admit, but it seems to me that an easy conscience is the best thing to have. God has put you in the world not merely to do your own pleasure, and how can you expect to

enter heaven if you make no effort to that end?"

"If God knows my heart," she replied, "he knows it's a good one. I've never done any sin, and I expect to go to heaven as well as any one else."

"If you were a Christian, you would be humble, and none but holy people can enter heaven."

"Has any one come from there? Have you 'been there and know all about it?" she asked in a tone no less insolent than that she had used from the beginning.

I would not repeat the language she made use of. Nothing seemed sacred to her. I selected two tracts, and going nearer to her, asked her if she would not oblige me by reading them.

"No; I never read them. I'd rather read 'Yankee Notions' and 'Vanity

Fair’;” and I saw by her manner it was useless to insist.

She had seemed so hardened throughout the conversation that I doubted if there was one tender spot in her heart, or if it were not already turned to stone. But I heard her address the babe that lay in her lap in tones of endearment, and I knew that the woman was not wholly crushed out of her.

Two young women, apparently domestics, remained in the room during our conversation, and seemed very much impressed and very sorrowful. One of them in particular was evidently affected by the sinful tone and manner of her mistress, and it was from a look she gave me that I was induced to desist from further entreaty. It was like sending shot against steel.

I handed the tracts to the domestic.

She seized them eagerly and put them in her pocket, as though she feared some evil hand might snatch them from her grasp.

It encouraged me to hope that even the crumbs of truth I was permitted to let fall were gathered by these, and will awaken in them a longing for the "bread of life."



CHAPTER XII.

“ALLAN G. KINCAID,

DIED AUGUST 2, 1864.”

HE was a little boy, scarcely nine years old, when the hand of pain was laid upon him, and he knew that he must die. Boyish sports must be given up, and the little sufferer be content to look upon the various amusements in which he could take no part. Yet not an impatient murmur passed his lips. Not once, in all those months of illness, did he express a wish to be well or to be able to indulge in the sports of other children.

I made many calls upon him, gave him picture-books and papers and

talked to him of Jesus. He was a willing listener, but so shy that I could not get him to express his mind freely on any subject. His little heart fluttered like a bird that was panting to be free, and it was difficult for him to speak except in short sentences.

Daily he grew weaker, yet was not confined to his bed until the latter part of July, when it became evident that his time on earth was short. It was during my absence from the city, and the little fellow wondered what had become of the lady who used to visit him. The Rev. Mr. B—— was sent for, and came at once.

“Well, my little boy,” he said as he sat by Allan’s side, “you are very sick; you are going to die. You are soon to leave this world; do you know where you are going?”

“To heaven,” said Allan, “to see Jesus and the angels.”

“Can you pray?”

Allan repeated the Lord’s Prayer and the twenty-third Psalm.

After further interesting conversation with this lamb called to the upper fold, the minister took his leave, firmly confident that it was well with the child. He grew rapidly worse.

“Are you afraid to die, Allan dear? Are you afraid to die?” asked his weeping mother.

“No, ma’am.”

“Are you sorry to leave mother?”

“No, I’m not sorry,” he replied.

“Will you make a place for me in heaven, Allan dear?”

“Yes, mother,” he exclaimed, clinging around her neck—“yes, mother, but you must be good;” and murmur-

ing, "Mamma—mamma—mamma," he passed away without a struggle.

"He was always a good boy," said his mother as we spoke together of the child still nearest her heart. "Many's the solemn word he's said that we thought nonsense at the time, but now it comes back to us."

In his plays with his brothers he would endeavor to impress upon their minds that God saw them, and would reprove them if they were disposed to do wickedly.

"God can do anything," was his frequent assertion, the truth of which no one dared gainsay.

"Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings hast thou perfected praise."

Mrs. Flynn, whose husband left her last June with the care of three young

children, is still struggling to keep up a decent appearance and provide for them the necessaries of life.

She is now employed in finishing army pants, at *eight* cents a pair, and by sewing until eleven P. M. she is able to earn thirty-two cents a day. Her husband was a Catholic, and had entire control of the children, but now the mother intends to have them brought up in her own faith, and would send them to Sunday-school if they were provided with suitable clothing.

The landlord, a kind-hearted man, allows her the use of a room and bedroom, rent free, in consideration of her taking care of the halls and stairways of the house. How long this arrangement is to continue, I do not know. The woman's health at present is such that she is unfitted for any severe ex-

ertion. The neighbors are disposed to be very kind to her, and consider her a worthy object of sympathy and charity.

I think she would be willing to part with at least one of her children if she were not required to give it up entirely.

A Mrs. McFadden, living in the rear of No. — Perry street, is a widow with three children, who receive but little of her care or attention, as she is obliged to be from home every day.

I inquired if she would be willing to have her children attend mission school.

“I would send them,” was the reply, “if I was able to get them clothes, or had time to put in order those they have. I am hardly able to pay the rent of this place and get things to eat.”

And what a place it was to have the name of home! I never shall forget the call I made upon her one noon. The stove was nearly in the centre of the room, and around it sat Mrs. McFadden and her two children—for the oldest son was a dock-loafer, and seldom at home, night or day—eating the dingy contents of the blackest frying-pan. They had but one knife and an old spoon between them, and yet they seemed really to enjoy a repast from which I turned with instinctive loathing.

Everything about the place denoted poverty and want of thrift, as well as entire ignorance of the blessedness of air and water, those freest gifts of Heaven.

A suggestion made at a meeting of

Sunday-school missionaries reminded me of an incident in my own experience.

I had been conversing with a woman on the advantage of Sabbath-school instruction for her only daughter, and also questioned her on her religious belief. She was a Roman Catholic, with no settled convictions, however, and desirous of learning the truth. Ascertaining that she had no Bible, I offered to give her one and read to her, as she was unable to do so herself. During my conversation a young man entered the room and assumed the position of listener. Afterward a woman came in to whom I put the question :

“Have you any children who are not in Sunday-school?”

“Do you think it’s just the thing,” said the young man, “to be taking

children out of their own schools and getting them into others? It's rather interfering with a person's belief."

"You are mistaken," was my reply, "if you suppose I am endeavoring to get children out of any Sunday-school. If they go, that is perfectly right. But you know there are many children who are on the streets, and it is those I am trying to 'gather in.'"

"Oh, that is all right, and a very good thing."

He went on to say that he was brought up a Methodist, but had decided that the Roman Catholic religion was the true religion, and so became a convert. He invited discussion, and we agreed on many points, that of purgatory being the principal stumbling-block. He could not reconcile it with his idea of justice that a man who had

committed some terrible crime could be forgiven and taken immediately into heaven, when there was no greater reward for those who had led blameless lives. I did my best to convince him there was no such probationary place between earth and heaven. He brought me the Catholic catechism, and I used it to strengthen my argument.

“Here,” said I, “is the question,

“‘What will be said to the righteous?

“‘*Come, ye blessed of my Father.*’

“The next in order asks,

“‘What shall be said to the sinner?

“‘*Depart from me, ye cursed.*’

“Well, you see it says nothing about any half-way house, and cannot refer to Scripture to prove that purgatory exists.”

He was half convinced, and was anx-

ious to see a Bible, and promised to read it carefully.

The next day I took one to Mrs. Kennedy, but the young man was not there. I have never seen him since, but I learned that he read in the sacred volume quite frequently, and I trust it will be as a lamp to his feet.



CHAPTER XIII.

MRS. GILL occupied but one room, a cellar-kitchen, which contained too little furniture to be called even comfortable. Her husband had met with a severe accident, and for many months had been unable to provide a living for his family.

By little and little they sank under the pressure of poverty, until they had actually hid themselves from every one who had known them in better days. They had known what it was to see their beloved borne from their sight by the unrelenting hand of death, but it had not drawn them any nearer to that Saviour who chastens but in love.

Mrs. Gill said it was impossible for her to attend church, situated as she was, but at every call I urged the matter upon her and tried to induce her to become a Christian.

She had one little girl whom I never saw, and who had never been to Sabbath-school. After many weeks of delay and disappointment, Mrs. Gill said her little girl would be ready to accompany me and was very anxious to go. I called for her the following Sunday. The children living on the floor above, knowing that Ellen was in readiness to go to Sunday-school, persuaded her to go with them, which she did. I did not call at the house for several weeks, and then Mrs. Gill was not at home.

I stepped into Mrs. B——'s room, up stairs, and inquired if Mrs. Gill's

little girl still went regularly to Sunday-school, with her children.

“Oh,” she exclaimed, “she never went but that one Sunday.”

Surprised, I asked the reason: “Didn’t she like it?”

“Why, the child was perfectly delighted. I never saw anything like it. She said she never was in such a beautiful place, and could hardly wait for Sunday to come again, so anxious was she to go.”

It was her theme of conversation all the next day, and Sunday-school and church seemed to her just the sweetest places this side of heaven.

On Monday night she was taken suddenly ill, and before the “gates of day” were opened she had entered where darkness never comes, and Sabbaths are eternal.

I saw Maggie at the house of Mrs. Miller, with whom she was staying temporarily. She had never been to Sunday-school, "but she ought to go," said Mrs. Miller, "and can go just as well as not. I've just bought her a new dress, and I'll make it up this week, and have her ready by next Sunday." Maggie was in favor of this arrangement, so it was decided that she should speak to her mother about letting Eddy go too, and I was to call for them the following Sunday.

The day came, but accompanied with a furious rain storm that no one, unless driven out, would care to encounter, so that I did not go out.

One day during the week, as I was passing down Christopher street, I met a young girl with a shawl over her head and a basket on her arm. I did

not recognize her at first, but when she smiled I knew it was Maggie.

Her teeth were remarkably white, and as her surroundings were not particularly so, they gleamed out with a marvelous brightness.

She came right up to me, and said: "You didn't come for me last Sunday?"

"Why, no; it stormed so hard you didn't expect me, did you?"

"Yes'm, I looked for you all day."

"That was too bad, but I will make it all right next Sunday."

She insisted on my going to her home, so I followed her lead up an alley way, then two steps carefully, lest I bump my head or miss my footing, then through the door at the left of the entrance, and this is Maggie's home!

It is nothing but a cellar, and every-

thing has a sort of under-ground look. There is a room at the back, and a bed which has a most uninviting appearance, as well as I can see it, for it is really so dark I can scarcely distinguish faces.

It seems impossible that human beings can accustom themselves to so much that is filthy and degrading.

Maggie had spoken of me, so I did not need to introduce myself to her mother. She was willing that Maggie and Eddy should go to school, and said they should be ready the next Sabbath, sure. She said also that, as the families in the house were strong Roman Catholics, she would rather not have me run the risk of being insulted by them, so would have the children meet me at Mrs. Miller's.

This time the weather was not in

fault, but Maggie and Eddy failed to make their appearance; I called again to inquire the reason.

"Their father wouldn't let them go," said Mrs. Eagen.

"That is very strange; I thought you were both perfectly willing."

"I didn't say anything to him about it, but when he saw me getting them ready, he asked me where they were going, and I told him. He said they shouldn't go; they had their own school to go to, and he wanted them brought up to their own belief."

I could say nothing. Maggie was disappointed, and so was I. I spoke to Mrs. Miller about it, and she said the excuse was worth nothing, that "Pete Eagen had no religion at all, and it made no difference to him where the children went."

The father and mother are both intemperate, and the children help support the family by begging and picking cinders. I thought I would wait until the inclement season was over, and then perhaps I might be able to bring Maggie under better influences than are at work in that home of wretchedness and poverty.





Valera and the Shoemaker.

CHAPTER XIV.

“**H**AVE you any children not in Sabbath-school?” I asked as I entered a shoemaker’s shop, behind the counter of which the proprietor sat plying his trade.

“No,” was the reply; “mine are too small.”

“You attend some place of worship yourself?”

“No, I do not.”

“No!” I exclaimed; “then to whom are you indebted for life and the blessings you enjoy?”

“Well, I may as well be honest about it, and tell you I don’t go to any church, for I don’t believe in them, but if I

went at all I should go to the Catholic church."

"You read the Bible?"

"Yes, I read everything, but if I took the Bible as my standard of faith, I should go to hell sure."

"Why!" I exclaimed, but he interrupted me with: "Where was your Bible in 1514?"

"It was hid."

"Ay, it was hid!" he sneered. "Let me tell you, lady, there is but one Church in the world, and that is the Roman Catholic Church, for it has lived through misery, persecution and error. Look at all these denominations that have sprung up, some within two years or so, and just see what they pretend to believe. I frequently go to Hoboken, to hear the open-air preaching, and it is amusing to listen to the follies

which are put into the minds of the ignorant. Don't you go to your own church next Sunday, but just see how differently some other denominations will explain some point in your belief. The Scriptures say, 'Seek, and ye shall find.'"

"Oh, I don't interpret in that way."

"Perhaps not."

"You appear to be well educated," I continued—"even beyond what one would suppose from your position."

"My parents gave me a good education when they had the means to do so; now I am poor and have a family to support, I must do that which I can do the best."

He told me of the position he once occupied and how distasteful it was to him, but I cannot fill my journal with all the particulars of my interview with

this man, who professed to know the duty of a Christian, and yet was far from being a true disciple of Christ.

“I am afraid you have educated your head, and not your heart,” I said, before leaving him.

“I’m afraid so, miss; I don’t think my heart is very soft.”

“Won’t you endeavor to educate it? for you know unless we become as little children we cannot enter the kingdom of heaven.”

“I think you’re right, miss;” and I left him to ponder the few words I had spoken in weakness, and promised I would repeat my call very soon.

Some days elapsed before I again presented myself at the unpretending shop.

“I have not come to talk with you to-day,” I said, “but here is a tract I

would like you to read." It was entitled, "Fifty Reasons for Attending Public Worship."

"I'll read it; I read the other one you gave me."

"It was good, wasn't it?"

"Oh yes. I like to read; I've read all of Tom Paine's works."

"They did you no good, I guess."

"Well, the man was smart, you can't deny that, and if a man don't do just as you think is right, you must at least give him credit for smartness. Now, there's Lee; I'm bitterly opposed to him, but he's an awful smart man; if he hadn't been, we'd have eaten him up long ago."

In this way he rattled on, until I turned the conversation.

"There's Mr. —, worth his millions, and he says, 'Frank, I never put

off till Monday what I can do on Sunday,' and he's worth his millions."

"Yet some time God will be revenged on him, you may be sure. He will not allow his day to be abused. You know it's God's day, not ours."

"You're right. But now suppose a man comes in and orders a pair of shoes to be done by Saturday night, he must have them. Well, I have one done, and Mr. Van Riper comes and says, 'Frank, I must have my boots by Sunday; I need them very much,' and I promise them, but I can't get them done until late, and I must take them over to Jersey City on Sunday morning."

There is no need of prolonging the conversation.

In many instances this breaking of the Sabbath is more the fault of the

employer than of the employé. The latter, with a large family to support, and unwilling to lose a good opportunity for increasing his store, encroaches unintentionally upon the sacred hours of the Sabbath. I told him that men would not respect him less if he respected the Sabbath more, and urged upon him the necessity of being more strict in the observance of the day.

As he seems willing to listen and desirous of having me visit him, I may through the medium of friendly conversation find my way to his heart, and with the aid of the Holy Spirit quicken into life that which is lying dormant.



CHAPTER XV.

THE worst house in my district—hardly safe, it was said, for any decent woman to enter—was in Weehawken street, a short block between West Tenth and Christopher, running parallel with Washington street. It was a low, double house, and contained nine families—sixteen adults and as many children—all given over to neglect and unqualified wretchedness. The room at the foot of the stairs, as you entered, was occupied by a man and his wife and three children. The wife was a good-looking American woman, with a face so white as to attract attention by reason of contrast with the sur-

roundings, but it was a hard, cold whiteness—the marble record that told of death and rottenness within.

Two Bibles, mute accusers, lay on the bureau, the only decent article of furniture in the room, while the bedstead—there was but one—was strewn with an indiscriminate mass of dry-goods that might have been fished up from some wretched mud-puddle. I involuntarily glanced toward the bed as I entered, to see if I could distinguish among the collection anything that bore the least resemblance to what are technically denominated bed-clothes, but it was impossible without a soap and water revelation.

I had frequent talks with Mrs. Burns, and succeeded in getting her eldest child into the mission-school. The husband I seldom saw. The cry of “nothing to

wear" had to be met and combated, for it would have been "giving aid to the enemy" to have provided clothing for these truly destitute ones, whose parents were too familiar with the way to the pawnshop and the liquor store. But Johnny Burns didn't mind his rags, and seemed to enjoy being in the Sunday-school, where he went regularly after the first morning until the small-pox came into the house, so ripe for contagion, and among the first and worst cases was this little boy.

I well remember one morning I called on this family. The husband and one child sat at the table taking their dinner of bread and potatoes. Mrs. Burns came forward with a babe in her arms but a few days old, wrapped in an old thin shawl, and not an article of clothing besides. The room was so filled

with smoke from the stove, which refused to draw, that my eyes were blinded, and a fit of coughing obliged me to leave the place in order to get my breath. How good, how sweet, the fresh air was! God's air so polluted was unfit for a Christian to breathe, and only when the poor have fresher air can the gospel thrive among them.

That little innocent baby was on my heart continually, and although I could easily predict the fate of my charity, my conscience would not be gainsaid, but a kind Providence prevented the charity by removing its object, and before my next visit, which was within a few days, the little one who had so excited my sympathy was mercifully taken away from the evil to come.

The woman herself had the reputation of being a first-rate laundress, but

preferred living in this wretched, comfortless, sinful way—a hardened, shameless, intemperate woman.

Oh the terrible appetite that can rob a woman of her best inheritance and make her fit company for the vilest sinners!

But up the stairs—a broken flight—there are others equally depraved.

In the first room to the left are three Irish women known as “the old maids,” one of whom has an unenviable reputation in the neighborhood even among her own associates. Indecent, unprincipled, over-garrulous, I soon ascertained that her manifest delight at my occasional appearance was caused by the hope that she might obtain from me some material with which to supply the fuel which set on fire her inordinate appetite for spirituous liquors. But I

learned to be cautious. It saddened me to think how the hearts of the benevolent-were chilled, and spontaneous charities repressed by the knowledge of the too frequent impositions practiced on the unwary.

Thus intemperance not only injures its votaries, but reflects on the really deserving, who, being in the minority, are brought under suspicion and made to suffer for the sins of others.

Across the hall lived a family in which I took a decided interest. The father was an honest, hard-working man, and did his best to keep his family respectable. Many a time have I seen him sit down to a meal of dry bread and black coffee. "Mary knows we oughtn't to live this way," he said, and Mary would confess her shortcomings, and with tears in her eyes prom-

ise to amend. But there is no reliance to be placed on the tears that always flow so freely when the "ardent" is in. Mary's "promises were like piecrust—made to be broken." However, before I ceased my visits altogether, I was permitted to see a slight improvement in the preparation of the food, and looked upon it as an indication of a more healthy appetite.

Mary would tell me what a sinner she was, how often she had grieved her Saviour, and seemed to long for a better state of things.

But it was a transient feeling. A good-natured, weak-minded woman, she was so easily led in the wrong direction that she had almost lost the impulse for right-doing, and her husband, having lost confidence in her, would not supply her with money, nor with articles to

make the room decently comfortable, so long as she manifested a disposition to waste his substance in riotous living.

I bought a nice worsted hood for her little girl to wear to mission school, and the second Sunday it was replaced by one that had seen hard service. I sent a direct message to the mother that the hood must be forthcoming the next Sunday, and enforced it by a visit during the week, and when I saw it again it was barely recognizable. These things are discouraging, for they are repeated over and over and over again.

Mary's friends are her ruin, and I have no doubt, could she be removed to a more decent locality and beyond the reach of temptation, she would in time overcome the cravings of an appetite so debasing. Her children are naturally smart and anxious to learn, but what

can be expected of children whose homes are not fit to live in, and whose parents are lost to shame and decency? I can well understand why there are so many young thieves and rogues in our city growing up to worse crimes, and so can any one who has seen the wretchedness and filth in which they are brought up. The wonder is that they are as decent as they are.



CHAPTER XVI.

WE can very soon tell what our theories are worth when we begin to put them into practice. A man may describe an engine which he has made beautiful in all its proportions and admirably adapted to the work it is expected to perform, and any amount of imaginative power will fail to give us that idea of the machine that we would have were we able to see it for ourselves. It is not my intention to discuss the value or variety of pet hobbies that have been ridden in these enlightened days, but merely to throw out a few thoughts on Sabbath-school teaching suggested more by observation than

experience. Some few months ago I commenced teaching in a mission school in this city. The class assigned to me was composed of but five girls between the ages of eleven and thirteen years.

The lesson for the entire school was in Luke, and I soon ascertained how little of the subject was comprehended by my class. They knew nothing at all about Lot, and very little in regard to Noah. I found them altogether unfamiliar with Bible history, which did not surprise me, but only made me feel how important it was that their minds should be trained and they taught in the Scriptures.

It occurred to me that it would be well to allow each teacher to use his or her own judgment in the instruction of the scholars until they were sufficiently familiar with Bible history, in order to

make the lessons intelligible and interesting.

We were talking of patience the other Sunday, and I mentioned the case of Job as one especially remarkable, and advised the girls to read about it during the week.

The next Sunday, Katy said to me: "I read all about Job, and wasn't he a patient man! His wife told him to curse God, but he wouldn't do it."

Then I asked her to tell us some of the trials he endured, which she did, the other girls bending forward to listen to the story as it fell from the lips of their companion.

Then I talked with them of other *heroes*, and gave them the history of Daniel to read about and study over during the week.

I cannot describe my feelings as I

sit before these children Sabbath after Sabbath. I want to tell them so much, I scarcely know where to begin, and I feel so dissatisfied with myself when the lesson is over that I am impelled to pray that God will blot out of their thoughts every word of mine and leave only Christ written there. I fall so far short of my intentions even that I am constrained continually to cry, "*Teach me, O Lord! teach me!*"

Katy now is a real nice German girl, but her parents are not strict in their observance of the Sabbath, and she comes so irregularly that I can have very little influence over her, and I do not see her when I call at the house, but I talk with her parents and pray for Katy, and I hope my weak efforts will not prove altogether vain.

Lizzie is a vain little girl, and thinks

more of a bit of bright ribbon than she does of her Sunday-school lessons. I don't think she opens her Bible from one Sunday till the next, and she always has some comical excuse for not knowing anything about the lesson—either she was too busy, or they went to Jersey, or they had company.

I asked her one Sunday if she had any idea why angels were always represented clothed in white. Our talk was of angels, and I wanted the children to get every idea out of the subject. No one knew, and Lizzie said it was "*because it was cool.*"

Mary Helwig is a brave, earnest little German girl, and I always feel paid if I find no one else to greet me on Sunday mornings, she is so interested and so anxious to learn, and has that love for her teacher which is the sweet-

est compensation any teacher could desire.

I am really attached to my class, but my duties as a missionary prevent my devoting to them individually the attention they really need. I know about the homes of Katy, Lizzie and Mary, and can see how the influence they receive there is acting upon them every week. Katy's parents are industrious and intelligent, have but this one child and humor her in every way. She finds employment down town and must have Sunday for a holiday, and my scholar is very seldom in her place.

Lizzie's surroundings are far more comfortable than those of any of my scholars, but her people belong to that class who live upon excitement and find no time for the consideration of serious things. Her mother seems a good-

hearted but frivolous woman, and the associations of six days are well calculated to obliterate all remembrance of the seventh from Lizzie's mind and heart.

With Mary Helwig it is so different; if I go to the house on Saturday, I find her busy as a bee helping her mother, scrubbing the floor or getting the dinner, and an active cheerfulness pervades the entire household. Mary's father is a great, strong man, but fond of liquor, spends his money foolishly and abuses his wife, who loves him notwithstanding.

Mrs. Helwig confides to me, in broken English, the many trials she has to encounter, and says she can remember the time when it did her good just to sit in church and listen to the services when she couldn't understand one word. Her

hope is in her children, and they are good children.

Oh how I long to purify these homes, that the hearts of these little ones may not be polluted with so much that is evil! Their surroundings are often so vile that it is impossible for them to escape contamination. Such sights as I have beheld with my own eyes are enough to convince me that it would be unreasonable to expect purity of morals, tenderness of conscience, or even decency of conduct, among the greater part of our population.

I felt anxious to manufacture some sort of a monitor for Lizzie—a conscience that would startle her once in a while—so I arranged a blank-book for each one, and gave them to them before the closing exercises.

“Girls,” I said, “I have arranged a

little book for each of you like this one I'll show you. I call it the 'Book of Battles.' You know you are in Christ's army, and are expected to fight like soldiers. Satan is your worst enemy, and he is ever watching and lying in wait for you. Guard every outpost. Show that you are on the Lord's side, and be terribly in earnest. I have put a motto or line on the inside of the cover. In this one it is: 'Are there no foes for me to fight?' and here on different leaves are some of the foes we have to meet: here is Selfishness, Impatience, Disobedience, and last of all, though not the least, Lying."

"Oh!" exclaimed the girls, who had been listening attentively.

"It has a terrible sound, I must say," I replied to the exclamation, "and I hope always to find that page blank," I con-

tinued. "I have drawn a line down each side of the page, leaving quite a margin. On one side is written, 'Victory,' on the other, 'Defeat.' When you fail to conquer any of these foes, be honest, and put a mark in the proper place."

They all promised to do exactly as I told them, and were quite excited at the thought of fighting battles at home, and gaining victories almost as important as any won in the field. They were to show the record to me at the end of each month, and after giving them a little necessary advice, I dismissed them to their homes with a silent prayer welling up from my heart's depths that they might prove soldiers indeed, early enlisted in the service of Christ, whose warfare is a perpetual conflict with sin. I was rather pleased to find

that this plan worked well, and was especially adapted to Lizzie's particular case. Her record was not especially flattering to herself, but it showed honesty of purpose, and the struggles she encountered, though simple in recital, were helps toward the formation of character.

I like the way in which Mrs. N—— instructs the infant scholars, and I learn something to my own profit whenever I make her a visit. She is so motherly and seems so much at home with the little folks, inquiring about their families and interesting herself in all that interests them, that I am not surprised that the children love to gather there to talk and sing of Jesus. And they all look so happy!

CHAPTER XVII.

BUT Valera's mission-work was rapidly drawing to a close. She had engaged in it with all the ardor of her philanthropic nature, and imperfect and unsatisfactory as all her efforts seemed, there was sufficient compensation to make her regret leaving it altogether. But physically she was unfitted for the duties, and her waning strength and failing energy warned her of the danger of further taxation. Many a time she paused at the foot of a long flight of stairs, measuring her ability, ascended slowly, but with a heart palpitating with alarming velocity, and arrived at the top with a bewilderment

of ideas and scarcely breath enough to make known her errand.

“Another failure!” sighed Valera, when the decision was given that the work must be relinquished—“another failure! What can I be capable of? If God takes the work out of my hands, who will continue it? Who will water the seed I have planted? I have ploughed up my field, dropped here and there a few seeds, but there will be no sheaves for me to carry home!”

Valera took up her heaviest cross when she became an invalid. Willing in spirit, but weak in flesh, she put herself under the disciplining power of God’s providences, and tried to comfort herself with the thought that he had other work for her to do, and that her present occupation in his service was to “stand and wait.”

Well, she had enough to think of, it is true, and her anxiety of mind in regard to these poor creatures who had just begun to know and confide in her was so great that she could only give expression to it in prayer. She knew how they lived, how much they were tried, and she had patience with the poor—more patience and more consideration for them than she had ever had before.

She thought so often of what one woman said who had come with her husband from the north of Ireland to make a home in the country of strangers. She was a good woman, too, and loved to talk of religion and the cause of Christ.

“Ah!” said she, “you take a red-hot coal out of the fire, and see how soon it cools! I used to think I couldn’t

live without going to church two or three times of a Sunday, but now that I am away from all my old associations, I find it so easy to stay at home."

There was need of a mission chapel in the neighborhood—some place where the poor might go to hear the preached word, and to which Valera might direct those who consented to break through their usual habits of indifference or neglect of Sabbath privileges, with the certainty of obtaining a welcome. The school in connection with which she labored was too distant for those who most needed the instruction, and any change of weather was sufficient excuse for those who were ignorant of the value of that which they slighted so easily.

There was work for at least three missionaries in that one district; what

could one weak woman accomplish? Valera had serious thoughts of starting a chapel herself, so many of her poor friends expressed a wish to attend church where she was in the habit of going. She thought she could preach to them in a general way, knowing their faults and weaknesses so well, and yet so timid was she in her approach to them personally. She could say from a rostrum with so much earnestness, "There are many careless and negligent among you, sinking your own souls in the depths of infamy, and dragging with you the souls of many whose blood crieth out from the ground even as did the blood of Abel." Yet she had not the courage to say to any one, "You are a wicked woman; God is angry with you; his vengeance seeketh you; Christ alone is your refuge; fly unto

him—this moment—now—before it is too late!”

Something sealed her lips whenever she meant to be most zealous, and so she kept silence and let God do the talking. She must keep the doors open that she had once set ajar until Christ was in, and then her work was ended. Perhaps that was just as much as he wanted her to do in this mission work, which she had accepted as an open door through which she must pass in order to test her discipleship. She had preached Christ to the best of her ability, dropping the leaven of her faith into the unleavened mass, and the result would only be known to Him into whose hands she committed the trust she so reluctantly relinquished.

“Enter, Lord! ’tis thine to give
All the strength by which we live;

Is it hunger? is it thirst?
Life at best, or at its worst,
Has no comfort to impart
Unless Jesus fills the heart.

“Human hearts are loth to plead
For the very thing they need;
Sin and Satan are so strong,
All the wheels of life go wrong;
Turn them, turn them, Lord, and teach
Of the kingdom they may reach.

“In these temples dark and damp,
Light thy lamp, Lord—light thy lamp;
Let its glow their guilt reveal,
Unto conscience make appeal,
Till they hate the thought of sin:
Enter, Lord, and dwell therein.

“Where thou dwellest, Lord, is peace;
Where thou reignest, conflicts cease;
Poor and wretched we may be,
We are rich in having thee;
Let thy love its light impart,
Let it dwell in every heart.”

CHAPTER XVIII.

THERE followed a whole summer of rest and inaction—rest of body, but not of mind, for Valera still carried the yoke upon her shoulders and knew that she must be on the lookout for work in some other field. Her repeated failures made her unhappy, of course; she had yet to learn that life was made up of beginnings, that God would round her work into completeness, though he called upon other hands to continue the work where she had dropped it. The needle is always a woman's refuge when everything else fails, and Valera resumed her low chair and her work-basket, glad to be able to do even a

little in the way of earning something, while she was gaining strength for some greater undertaking, for she had not yet found her mission.

Another new year dawned, and found Valera as restless as a bird that beats its wings against the bars of its prison in its frantic efforts to escape. A new inspiration came upon her, and full of its influence she slipped her satchel on her arm and went in search of fortune. She called upon a composer of music, and tremblingly offered one or two songs she had written.

“Beautiful! Sweet!” were the exclamations that fell from admiring lips. “You are a genius! Do you ever write Sunday-school hymns?”

“I have just commenced,” said Valera.

“Have you any with you?”

"Yes, sir."

"Do you know Mr. H——?"

"No."

"Wait a moment, and I will go with you and introduce you."

So they went, and were admitted into the office of Mr. H——. "Allow me to introduce you to Miss ——," said Valera's escort; "she can furnish us, I think, much better words for music than we have been in the habit of receiving."

"Have you anything with you?" inquired Mr. H——, addressing Valera. She handed him three hymns and awaited his decision. She had very little confidence in herself or her ability, but hope, brave hope, sustained her. They were read and laid aside.

"Have you any more?"

"Yes," said Valera, smiling at her

thought; "plenty where those came from."

"Well, I will take these, and as many more as you can give me;" and he placed in her hand their equivalent in bank notes.

A new light irradiated her countenance, a brighter glow suffused her cheek.

Another door was opened, and her course was clear.

Again the needle was laid aside and the poet's corner established, from which nook her imagination might soar far away into cloud-land. Never before had she felt the same glow at her heart, for never before had she taken up any task so exactly in accordance with her tastes and inclinations. She counted the steps by which she had been led, saw how she had been educated for this

work, how at the right time God had directed her path and brought about the unexpected result.

In the pen, that wonderful weapon, lay all her strength. Through it she might speak to souls that were near and afar off, and by it win a competency and perhaps renown, and she sought her desk each morning with a freshness of soul and activity of brain that often surprised her.

The grandmother's fear that "if Valera were a poet she would have to live in a garret" had an influence upon the family, who saw an unlimited outgo for a moderate income, and would fain have turned Valera's ambition into some other channel. But she worked on, and she still continues to work, undaunted by trials or misfortunes that might have overwhelmed a less courageous spirit,

her best reward being the assurance that she continues to grow.

He who appointed her pathway through life knows what is best for Valera, and though he closes one door, he as surely opens another, and if the room be larger or smaller, it is there she is to work.

She has achieved even more than she anticipated, has established her position, and with firm confidence in Him who gave and taught her how to use her talents, she looks forward trustfully to the time when a seal shall be set upon her labors, and the blessed eulogy be spoken :

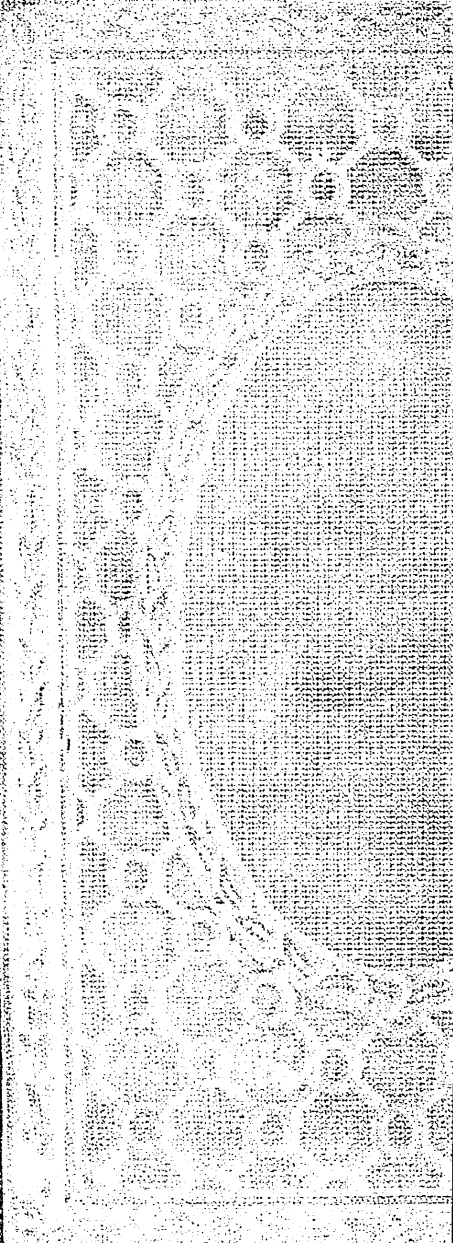
“SHE HATH DONE WHAT SHE COULD.”

THE END.

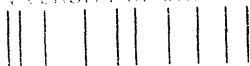
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